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ABSTRACT

Public Education in Colorado is serving as a demonstration project for the Cooperative Accountability Project, as well as for its own accountability statute. An analysis of accountability progress resulting from data gathered from the second annual accountability report is discussed and summarized. Current Colorado Department of Education programs, such as the School Improvement Process teams, are described as they impact upon accountability in Colorado. Proposed SEA programs designed to assist the LEA implementation of accountability are highlighted in terms of the specific SEA-LEA needs which they satisfy. The analysis of accountability programs in Colorado also identifies the performance and process objectives found by LEA's to be most promising, as well as those whose assessment has been determined to be unsuccessful or not cost effective. (Author)

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"AN EVALUATION OF ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAMS IN COLORADO"

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Colorado Department of Education

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INTRODUCTION:

An educational accountability law was passed in Colorado in June of 1971, which was designed "to define and measure quality in education, and thus to help the public schools of Colorado to achieve such quality and to expand the life opportunities and options of the students of the state; further, to provide to local school boards assistance in helping their school patrons to determine the relative value of their school program as compared to its cost." As one can readily see from this partial legislative declaration, the intent of the law was to serve the students and the citizens of the state rather than to be an additional administrative chore which school people had to endure.

At the time the Colorado Educational Accountability Law was passed, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) had just completed a rather comprehensive study on developing a School Improvement Process (SIP), which involved a series of significant events whereby individual school districts could increase the effectiveness of both their instruction and their instructional programs. The SIP was initially designed to be used by schools to move in the direction of contract accreditation and, by using these protocols, they could follow a developmental sequence for a higher level of accreditation. In attempting to implement a statewide accountability program the CDE, as

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* Dr. Erion has made a significant input into the data collection and analysis portion of this paper. The senior author regrets that this degree of involvement was not known at the time the proposal for the symposium was prepared, so Dr. Erion could receive proper authorship in both the program and the AERA abstracts.

any state educational agency, knew that the school districts in the state comprised a whole range of educational sophistication and expertise ranging from a mere knowledge of instruction procedures through the implementation of some rather elegant and sophisticated educational procedures. The Department quite wisely chose to employ the procedures of the SIP as a basic model that any district could emulate to achieve educational accountability.

A State Advisory Committee for Educational Accountability was formed, as required by law, and they developed the rules and regulations to be employed in implementing accountability on a statewide basis. These rules and regulations required that school districts would enter the total accountability process developmentally over a three to five year span. The first two phases of the workshop activities performed by the CDE SIP team were those involving the development of goals and objectives. During the 1971-72 school year approximately 170 of the 181 school districts supplied personnel to receive this workshop training.

The first annual report required under the Educational Accountability Act was completed in December 1971, after the program had been in action for approximately six months. My presentation to you today will describe the data that were received on the second annual report during the fall of 1972, and I will make some comparisons between the 1971 and 1972 reports where comparable data were collected.

I have organized the remainder of this presentation into three broad areas of concern which have been measurable to date. These are: (1) the composition and activities of the local advisory committee, (2) the progress made by school districts in formulating their educational goals under accountability, and (3) an analysis of inferences that can be made from performance and process objectives developed to date. (For the second annual report all districts were not

required to have written performance objectives, although the measuring instrument asked for information concerning these if the district had them available.)

FINDINGS:

(a) Accountability Committees

The Colorado Educational Accountability Act required that local school districts establish a local accountability committee consisting of "at least one parent, one teacher, one school administrator, and a taxpayer from the district." All 181 school districts in the state have established accountability committees. Based upon a correlational analysis, in general, the larger the district, the larger the committee and the more meetings held ($\bar{r}$ = .390; n = 178;p.=.001). Also, there is some indication that there is more productivity if the district belongs to an active BOCS rather than operating independently (r = .422; n = 26; p. = .03). (A BOCS is a board of cooperative services which is formed by a group of school districts to provide cooperative administrative, research, and other supporting services to the member districts. Those committees which held open meetings to discuss goals also seemed to be more productive in terms of producing reports or recommendations to the school board (r = .308; n = 165; p. = .001).

In comparing the 1971 and 1972 data a chi square analysis was undertaken. These data for the local advisory committee activities are contained in Table I.

Table I

Local Accountability Advisory Committee Activities by School District

Comparison Activities	1971 Data YES	1971 Data NO	1972 Data YES	1972 Data NO	χ	DF	Sig.	Direction of Change
Committee Appointment	175	6	181	0	6.10*	1	.05	All districts involved
Meeting schedule filed with Board of Education	80	101	147	34	*** 53.03	1	.001	More scheduled meetings
Written Reports Produced	28	153	138	43	*** 134.53	1	.001	More reports

An analysis of the data in Table I reveals that in 1972 all 181 school districts had appointed an accountability committee at report time. Also, the 1972 report suggests that significantly more districts have a regular schedule of meetings on file with their school boards. Finally, in 1972 there were approximately five times as many district accountability committees reporting that they had produced written reports or recommendations to their respective school boards. This latter finding, while a statistically significant improvement over 1971, still represents only approximately 75 percent of the Colorado school districts.

The districts were asked to indicate the frequency of their accountability meetings throughout the year. These data were reported in Table II.

Table II

Frequency of District Accountability
Advisory Committee Meetings

Comparison / Frequency	1971 Data	1972 Data	Total
Weekly	7	3	10
Twice Monthly	47	45	92
Monthly	78	104	182
Other	32	16	48
No Response	17	13	30
Total	181	181	362

DF = 4 $\chi^2 = 11.21$*

* p.05 = 9.49; ** p.01 = 13.28

An analysis of the data in Table II reveals that for the most part the monthly meeting schedule appears to be most representative for the school districts throughout the state. It is to be assumed that this monthly meeting activity will probably continue through the 1973-74 school year.

(b) The Development of District Goals

According to the rules and regulations adopted by the State Accountability Advisory Committee, school districts were to have had their goal statements completed by July 1972. The districts were required to submit a list of their goals along with their annual educational accountability report to the CDE in September 1972. Of the 181 districts completing the annual accountability report, 45 or 24.9 percent of the districts included their goal statements.

Where there was participation in goal development, it was generally broad-based with students, parents, minorities, and other representatives from the community involved. Broad-based involvement in goal development correlated with the generation of performance objectives (r= .425; n = 165; p. = .001), and the degree to which objectives had already been developed (r = .451; n - 89; p. = .001).

All data for the local involvement in goal development are contained in Table III.

(See next page)

TABLE III

Degree of Local Involvement in Goal Development

Comparison / Kind of Involvement	1971 Data			1972 Data			χ^2	df	Sig.	Direction of Change
	Not Considered	Planned	Completed	Not Considered	Planned	Completed				
Open Meetings	73	80	28	20	85	76	*** 52.54	2	$< .001$	More Completed
Discussion with Parent Groups	63	96	22	15	102	64	*** 50.23	2	$< .001$	More Completed
Discussion with Student Groups	65	94	22	14	93	74	*** 61.10	2	$< .001$	More Completed
Discussion with Administrator Groups	63	77	41	20	61	100	*** 48.83	2	$< .001$	More Completed
Discussion with Teacher Groups	55	96	30	13	86	82	*** 55.81	2	$< .001$	More Completed
Discussion with Community Groups	104	66	11	48	96	37	*** 40.29	2	$< .001$	More Planned and Completed
Discussion with School Board Members	54	94	33	14	90	77	*** 41.22	2	$< .001$	More Completed

An analysis of the data in Table III suggests that open meetings and discussions with parents, students, administrative groups, teacher groups, community groups and with school boards increased significantly from 1971 to 1972. It should be noted that while parents, students, administrators, teachers, and school board participation in goal development occurred during the year, the local accountability committee seemed less willing to include other community groups (Chambers of Commerce, National Foundations, etc.) in this task during 1972. Thus, it appears that the school districts in Colorado have made considerable progress in establishing their initial district wide accountability program, as well as formally stating the goals for education which represents an outgrowth of both community study and community needs assessment procedures.

(c) Objectives

The annual reporting form for 1972 included a section for those districts who had begun to develop performance and process objectives for their respective educational programs.

Those districts which prepared an accountability plan tended to report program success indicators (standardized tests, locally prepared tests, performance, vocational and college aptitude tests, as well as college entrance rate), and cost data to a greater extent to the public ($\bar{r}$ = .332; n = 176; p. = .001). Those districts which received consultative assistance from the CDE, BOCS, or independent consultants had a greater number of objectives developed for multiple school programs ($\bar{r}$ = .414; n = 49; p. = .001).

Broad-based inservice training in objectives' writing correlated significantly with the actual development of performance and process objectives at the elementary ($\bar{r}$ = .339; n = 86; p.=.001); junior high ($\bar{r}$ = .371; n = 91; p. = .001); and, at the highschool level, ($\bar{r}$ = .364; n = 89; p. = .001). Those districts which have greater number of programs with program objectives developed, had a high level of involvement by students and minorities in the goals development stage ($\bar{r}$ = .322; n = 45; p. = .03).

Those districts with more programs with objectives already developed have planned <u>less</u> inservice training in the preparation of objectives (r = .390; n = 43; p. = .01); however, plans for inservice training correlate highly with plans for development of objectives ($\bar{r}$ = .358; n = 88; p. = .001). The number of school administrators in a given school district correlates positively with the number of programs for which performance objectives generated (r = .390; n = 45; p. = .01).

The 1971-72 comparison of the local involvement in the development of performance and process objectives are contained in Table IV.

Table IV

(See next page)

TABLE IV

DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERFORMANCE AND PROCESS OBJECTIVES

Comparison / People Involved	1971 DATA				1972 DATA				χ^2	df	Sig	Direction of Involvement
	None	Little	Mod-erate	Sub-stantial	None	Little	Mod-erate	Sub-stantial				
Teachers	35	15	21	110	95	9	13	63	*** 43.85	3	<.001	less
Adminis-trators	37	17	33	94	98	6	18	59	*** 45.24	3	<.001	less
Parents	80	41	49	11	122	30	19	10	*** 23.72	3	<.001	less
Taxpayers	123	29	22	7	129	25	19	8	.73	3	N.S.	- - -
Students	76	42	45	18	120	26	26	9	*** 21.68	3	<.001	less

An analysis of the data in Table IV tends to be somewhat disconcerting with reference to progress in the objectives portion of the accountability process. It becomes difficult to know who other than teacher and administrators are developing objectives. In every instance the "none" category increases from 1971 to 1972. In light of the correlations cited prior to the presentation of Table IV and the correspondingly low numbers of districts who had achieved the performance and process objectives stage of accountability, perhaps the "none" category increase from 1971 to 1972 becomes a little less disconcerting but, nevertheless, remains a cause of some concern.

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

Retrospect:

The first two years of accountability have resulted in some success and some failure. Generally it was found that:

1. Local Accountability committees which had representation from students, minorities, and parents, in addition to educators, tended to have a more effective accountability program in terms of the goals and objectives developed than did those districts whose committees had more limited membership.
2. Districts which sought outside consultative assistance (CDE, BOCS, private consultants, etc.) tended to have more well-rounded programs.
3. Those districts who had devoted appreciable time to planning for accountability tended to be further along in the overall School Improvement Process.
4. The statewide acceptance of educational accountability has increased over the two years that the act has been in force. Approximately 75% of the school districts are reporting to the publics they serve.

5. Although only 25% of the districts supplied the CDE with copies of their stated district goals, most districts reported that this step had been accomplished.

Prospect :

As the Colorado Department of Education continues to provide guidance and assistance to school districts on accountability, the following issues appear to be most pressing:

1. The SIP team will work closely with the 25% of the districts (45) who are experiencing difficulty developing goals and objectives, as well as in preparing local accountability reports.
2. The SIP team will continue to canvass the state presenting workshops on PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION, and EVALUATION components of the School Improvement Process.
3. More information must be made available to school districts relative to the form and alternative approaches for preparing district-wide accountability reports.
4. CDE support in the development of comprehensive evaluation must be provided to districts. The major evaluative tasks will be to determine: program effectiveness; student achievement; and cost effectiveness by competent evaluation functioning at the local level.
5. Increased cooperation and sharing of resources at all levels is necessary. This includes inter district cooperation within Colorado, cooperative efforts between CDE and institutions of higher education in Colorado, and national cooperation through the Cooperative Accountability Project.

6. If the accountability law is to serve the hopes and aspirations of those who are seriously concerned over the quality of public education, a more intensive effort is essential by all those concerned with improvements in education.